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Kennedy Death

How Johnson Cut TV Interview

Washington

The final scheduled installment of a CBS interview with former President Johnson omits, at Mr. Johnson's request, a comment questioning the Warren Commission's "single assassin" theory on the death of President John F. Kennedy.

The deletion, made in an interview to be televised Saturday night, was requested by Mr. Johnson on the grounds of national security.

A CBS source, who confirmed that the former President expressed reservations about the Warren Commission finding that Mr. Kennedy was murdered by a single assassin, refused to disclose the wording of the question put to Mr. Johnson and his answer.

Richard S. Salant, president of CBS News, which purchased the right to film the interviews for a reported \$300,000, confirmed that deletions had been made and said the interview will include this message some 30 seconds into the program:

"Certain material has been deleted from this broadcast at President Johnson's request, made on the ground of national security."

Sources close to CBS said Mr. Johnson, asked by interviewer Walter Cronkite for his opinion of the commission findings, replied that he has never been "absolutely" satisfied with the report.

In particular, Mr. Johnson expressed doubts about the "motivations and connections" of Lee Harvey Oswald, the sources said. The reference was apparently to the accused assassin's defection to the Soviet Union and claimed relationship with the Communist party.

The interview, the third in

the series, was filmed last September and October at the LBJ ranch. However, it was not until approximately three weeks ago that Mr. Johnson made the request, apparently after hearing a playback of the audio portion of the film.

The request touched off an internal dispute within CBS. Salant was reportedly unhappy with the decision to accede to Mr. Johnson's request.

CBS news executives say such requests when made by Presidents or former Presidents have in the past been honored only when they were made immediately after or within a day of the filming and only when the material to be deleted clearly pertained to "military information."

According to Salant, CBS'

contract with Mr. Johnson did not give the former chief executive the rights of censorship or review.

According to Burton Benjamin, executive producer of the interview series, called "LBJ," "the written agreement permits him (Mr. Johnson) to delete for national security."

A "tease" episode at the end of the second show in the series, televised last February 6, shows Mr. Johnson telling Cronkite: "Getting back to the Texas trip, I say much was written about that trip to Texas, Walter and from my personal knowledge most of what's been written was wrong. And I think most of it was deliberate."

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Johnson entered hospital 2 March 1970, undisclosed illness, left hosp 13 March 70